

Mid-Region Council of Governments

agribusiness connection

connecting farmers and markets in central New Mexico

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Contact Information

For more information about MRCOG's Agribusiness Task Force, to get involved, or to suggest newsletter articles, please contact:

Randall Falkner
(505) 724-3623
rfalkner@mrcog-nm.gov

Ann Simon
(505) 724-3617
asimon@mrcog-nm.gov

Information about the Task Force, its meetings, public events, and local agriculture issues can also be found at

AGBZ.NET

Selling to Albuquerque Public Schools

APS has acquired funding to purchase fresh and, whenever possible, local produce for its students. Most local growers are unable to supply all of the 40,000 APS servings a day, but there are specific programs in which they can participate:

- *Healthy Eating by Design* and other snack programs
- *Kids Cook!*, a multicultural nutrition and food learning program in nine Albuquerque public schools
- APS Catering

To help small producers and others take advantage of the opportunities, APS organized a produce workshop on June 22 during which Priscilla Saavedra and Esther Quesada explained the bidding process. To simplify the bid process, it will now be

done on a monthly, rather than weekly, basis.

Priscilla sets up all contracts. In order to get a contract number, producers need to submit an initial bid, but they can respond with "no bid." This number, once assigned, can then be used during the rest of the year.

APS expects to receive fresh, unspoiled products and to be informed of the correct case weight and count. Esther recommends that small growers indicate the amount of product available. Priscilla will inform the award winner(s) ("contractors") by e-mail. Steve Carleton or Sandy Garcia of Central Kitchen, will then place orders with the contractor(s). All orders are to be delivered to the Central Kitchen, 912 Oak Street NE.

Local Farmers' Markets: a great way to sell

Do you have an abundance of apricots? Zucchini? The local growers' markets are a great sales venue, because you can sell directly to the consumer, meet your customers, and avoid the "middleman." And consumers love the markets because they can get guaranteed fresh produce, support local agriculture and enjoy a fun, family-friendly outing.



Please see the list below for specific times and locations as well as contact names and numbers.

Downtown ABQ Market
8th & Central Ave.
Sat 7 a.m. — 11 a.m.
Season: June 10 — late Oct
Contact Eric Garretson
(243-2230)

Central ABQ Market
Caravan East Parking Lot
7605 Central Ave. NE
Sat & Tues 7 a.m. — noon
Season: June 24 — end of Oct
Contact Mike Sofia (869-5203)

APS Contact Information

Priscilla Saavedra, APS Buyer
(505) 878-6117 or
saavedra_pr@aps.edu
Esther Quesada,
APS Procurement
(505) 345-5661 x 37031 or
quesada@aps.edu



How the Mid-Region Council of Governments got involved in agribusiness

In 1999, MRCOG established a Committee on Agriculture with two regional goals: preservation of agricultural land, and building an economic base for agriculture.

In 2001, a study was conducted that provided the impetus for the Agriculture Committee to begin discussing ways to advocate the value of localized agriculture as part of the regional economy.

In 2003, the Committee was reorganized into an Agribusiness Task Force. Its members include farmers and ranchers as well as economic development specialists, restaurant owners, food distributors, scientists, and processors. The group's focus is currently on networking and generating market opportunities for the region's small scale farming and ranching operations, as well as fostering the preservation of agricultural land.

Check agbz.net for more info.

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A Word of Welcome



Welcome to the first issue of Agribusiness Connection, a new quarterly newsletter connecting local farmers and ranchers in New Mexico's mid-region to viable and sustainable markets.

The Mid-Region Council of Governments' Agribusiness Task Force has been working hard to keep our agricultural lands intact and improve the lives of this region's farmers. We hope this newsletter will help accomplish some of its goals. Most importantly, I hope that you find it useful and will let us know what you think!

Look for future newsletters for ideas on making your own market connections!

Very sincerely,

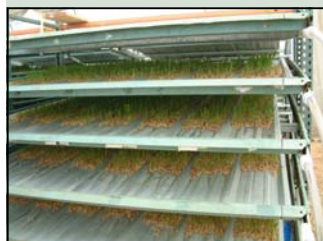
Lawrence Rael

Executive Director, Mid-Region Council of Governments



Controlled Greenhouse Environments

Conserve water and extend growing season



For small farmers in the middle Rio Grande valley, greenhouses can extend the growing season and provide a more consistent supply for local markets. That was the conclusion reached at the July meeting of MRCOG's Agribusiness Task Force in Albuquerque's South Valley. Two types of model greenhouses—one high-tech, and another, a more low-tech "hoop house," were described at the meeting.

The high-tech model was developed by Sandia National Labs in cooperation with Soilutions, a company in the South Broadway area. "This is a drought survival tool," said Phil Pohl, principal member of the technical staff in Sandia's Geoscience and Environment Center, as he looked around the large, \$100,000 greenhouse.

"Our biggest crisis, worldwide, is the threat to human health presented by the lack of potable water, and the biggest consumer of water is irrigated agriculture." Using controlled hydroponic experiments, Steve Gomez, the Hydroponics Technician of the Indio-Hispanic Youth Corps, explained that the

South Valley greenhouse is demonstrating how much water can be conserved in the production of cattle feed—in this case corn. "The whole idea is to save water in the growing of forage," said Gomez.

Contained growing environments don't have to be as sophisticated as Sandia's greenhouse in order to be effective, though, as the presentation by agricultural specialist Del Jimenez, of NMSU's Alcalde Science Center, demonstrated. Hoop Houses, built by covering a curved framework of wood, pipe or metal, with plastic film, can provide shade, protection, and a controlled temperature for everyday crops at a cost of about \$1 per square foot.

"These structures are practical, applicable, and profitable," said Jimenez. According to Jimenez there are about 350 of these units up right now in New Mexico. Jimenez gives workshops on how to construct hoop houses and says that NMSU's workbook on these structures is one of their most popular publications.

Don Bustos, an Espanola farmer

who used NMSU research to build a variant of a hoop house, says his cold frames allow him to supply Santa Fe Schools with lettuce throughout the fall and winter. Bustos estimates the cost of his 2,500 square-foot unit was paid back in about 60 days with the bite-size lettuce he sold to the schools for \$5 a pound.

Bustos's Santa Cruz Farm produces 76 different crops, 12 months of the year. "You don't need huge production to supply the schools," he says. "You can start small and do it year round with less water and weeds in the winter."

Another farmer from the Los Padillas area of the South Valley, Michael Reed, said it was important to have contracts lined up in advance because timing is crucial. "Markets are important, and a year-round farmers market would be a big help," he said.

Both Reed and Bustos paid off their hoop houses rapidly. For those who cannot self finance, NMSU's Jimenez says that grants and loans from the Farm Bureau, private and public agencies are available to construct the greenhouses.

For more information on hoop houses contact Del Jimenez at 505-670-5430 or djimenez@nmsu.edu, or check out www.growerssupply.com/greenhouses or simply google Hoop Houses.

To download the NMSU Hoop House Building Manual go to http://cahe.nmsu.edu/pubs/_circulars/CR-606.pdf

For information on the Sandia project contact Phil Pohl at pipohl@sandia.gov or go to www.sandia.gov/agriculture or www.ihyouthcorps.org.

New Kid on the Block: Nob Hill Market

May 18th marked the opening of the latest addition to the Albuquerque area Growers' Market scene. And yes, some old friends are there... Albuquerque's figgerer, Lloyd Kreitzer, with his figs (and trees), the *Intergalactic* bread lady, Amy Quirke, with her vegetable calzones, and the exotic mushroom people, Gael Fishel and Scott Adams.

Those are only a few of the 15 to 20 vendors who have been selling the fruits of their labor at the Nob Hill Growers' Market on Wednesdays from 3 – 7 p.m. in Morningside Park, three blocks east of Carlisle between Silver and Lead SE.

"We started the Nob Hill market to give growers another outlet during the workweek, and to cater to the pedestrian, university area," says Georgia Daves, the Nob Hill Grower's Market manager. So far the market draws about 200 customers each week to the semi-shady park.

One vendor, Amy Quirke, is a young baker who recently moved her bakery from Taos to Santa Fe.

She chose the Nob Hill Market because other local markets already offered baked goods. Among her wares: green chile pesto bread and roasted garlic and arugula breads, which made a great complement to the goat cheeses from Mountainair available at the stall across the way. How to tell? Both vendors were giving generous samples to mix and match.

For both vendors, the market was an opportunity to test market new flavors and launch new products.

To protect consumers, vendors who sell at this and other farmers markets must meet certain requirements and obtain a license from the City's Environmental Health Department. Items sold at the market must be grown or made by the vendor or his or her family in New Mexico. Limited amounts of produce from neighboring farms may be sold, if approved by the market manager. Organic items must be verified by corroborating certification, kept on hand.

Nob Hill Market Manager
Georgia Daves
869-3553
ggdaves03@yahoo.com
Cost of table: \$4

City of Albuquerque
Environmental Health
Department
768-2600



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Corrales Growers' Market

Corrales Recreation Center
Sun 9:00 a.m. — noon
(April 30 — Oct 31)
Wed 4:00 p.m. — 7:00 p.m.
(June — Sept 22)
Contact Al Gonzales at
898-6336

Nob Hill Growers' Market

299 Morningside Drive SE
Thurs 3:00 p.m. — 7:00 p.m.
Season: May 18 to Nov 9
Contact Georgia Daves
(869-3553)

Cedar Crest Farmers' and Arts Market

12127 North Hwy 14 (SR-14)
2.3 miles N of I-40, Cedar Crest
Wed 3:00 p.m. — 7:00 p.m.
Season: June 28 — Oct
Contact Madelyn Hastings
(281-8561)

Los Ranchos Growers' Market

6718 Rio Grande Blvd. NW
Sat 7:00 a.m. — 11:00 a.m.
(May 6 — Oct 28)
Oct hrs: 8:00 a.m. — 11:00 a.m.

Los Ranchos Winter Market

2nd Sat of each month
10:00 a.m. — noon
Season: Nov 11 — Apr 14
Contact Sue Brawley at
890-2799

South Valley Growers' Market

Cristo Del Valle Presbyterian Church
3907 Isleta Blvd. SW
Sat 8:00 a.m. — noon
Season: June 24 — mid Oct
Contact Rhonda Reinert
(877-4044)

Belen Growers' Market

Anna Becker Park, Reinken
Fri 5:00 p.m. — sellout
Season: July 8 — Oct 28
Contact Jenniffer Singleterry
(401-4390)

Bernalillo Farmers' Market

282 Camino del Pueblo,
one block south of US 550
Fri 4:00 p.m. — 7:00 p.m.
Season: July 7 — late Oct
Contact Emily MacLeod
(550-0234)

Edgewood Farmers' Market

1 Eunice Court
one mile west of N.M. 344
Mon 3:00 p.m. — 7:00 p.m.
Season: June 26 — end of Oct
Contact Madelyn Hastings
(281-8561)

If you or someone you know would like to receive this publication electronically, please contact us.

Have story ideas? Let us know! Call Ann at 724-3617.

Meet the Farmer



Jesse Daves

Age: 29

Location of Farm:
Bosque Farms

Size of Farm: 1.5 acres
divided into several plots
on two properties

Meet the Farmer: Jesse Daves

Q What do you grow?

A I try and grow with the seasons, as diverse a cropping as I can. During the summer months I specialize in tomatoes, peppers, potatoes, eggplants, carrots, swiss chard, and green beans. In the spring I grow garlic, several types of onions, lettuces, broccoli, beets, arugula and spinach. Fall and winter are similar to spring. I use woven row covers to extend the season and protect winter crops.

Q How did you become interested in farming?

A My interest in farming comes from my desire to one, engage in an occupation where I could see tangible results from my work; two, to be a productive and beneficial member of the community; three, to work towards a more sustainable, ecologically orientated society; and four, to be more in touch with the earth as a living entity.

Q Where did you train to be a farmer?

A I did an intensive, one season, apprenticeship in Sebastopol, California, about an hour and a half north of San Francisco.

Q What are the most important things you learned?

A That I have a particular talent for growing crops and a temperament suited to this occupation. Practically, how to culture different crops and when to plant, how to build fertile soil. And, critically, how to market those crops through farmers' markets.

Q Where do you sell your crops?

A I sell primarily at two Albuquerque farmers' markets: the Downtown (Albuquerque) market and the new Nob Hill market. I also sell limited amounts to La Montanita Coop in Albuquerque and to a few restaurants in the Nob Hill area of Albuquerque.

Q What would be most helpful for you to improve your operation/business?

A At this point I find that I am reaching a point, or have reached the point, where I need help in the form of an employee or intern to do field work and help with marketing. I am not able to really take full advantage of the marketing possibilities that are available, nor the real potential yields of my garden.

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**Mid-Region
Council of Governments**
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